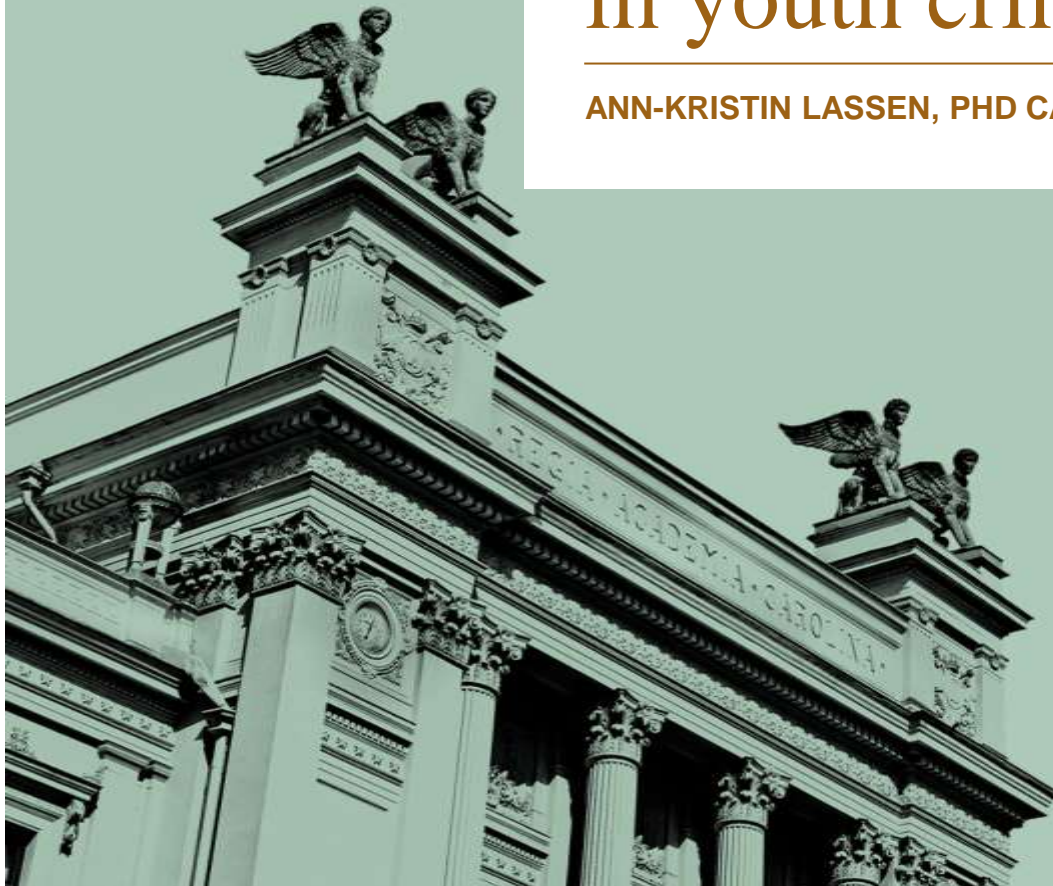




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Knowledge and (un)certainty in youth crime prevention

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Background:

- Study of knowledge use in inter-agency cooperation between Schools, Social Services and Police: SSP
- SSP usually coordinated by an SSP-consultant or SSP-coordinator
- SSP used as organisational framework throughout Denmark but varies locally in composition and reach



Examples of SSP tasks:

- Youth crime prevention at the general level: e.g. implementing 'social norms marketing' programmes in schools; organise free indoor sports events during winter
- Youth crime prevention at the specific level: e.g. conflict mediation
- Youth crime prevention at the individual level: working closely with parents, social workers, police and/or other professionals



Explorations of knowledge in SSP work

- Evidence-based knowledge and methods used as an antidote to ‘moral panics’: e.g. the implementation of *social norms marketing*; wide reference to statistics about young people’s behaviour
- Evidence-based knowledge and methods also secure certainty in practice and provide a shared professional language
- Problems arise when no ‘certain’ knowledge exists



Example from SSP-conference:

Q: "how can we work with young people's norms in groups?"

A: "very little research and documentation"; "can't recommend a given approach but can't dismiss it either"



Example from evaluation of conflict mediation:

Conflict Mediator: "no, it wasn't the best solution, but I thought it was when I did it"

SSP-Coordinator: "yes, but it was good to try it out so you could see how it worked and how it didn't work – it's great when it works but so not good when it doesn't"



Example from evaluation of conflict mediation:

SSP-Coordinator: "but it looks like your efforts have worked [...], we can share all these reflections but you have actually solved the conflict, despite all the things you could have done differently [laughs], then you've actually solved it"



Phronetic knowledge:

”Phronetic knowledge is not aimed at universal rationality and production of evidence by testing theories; rather, it is knowledge that comes from a close understanding of practice in specific contexts. This practical knowledge or expertise is difficult to teach fully, because it has a dimension that cannot be expressed verbally.” (Petersen & Olsson, 2014: 4).



Summary:

- Evidence-based knowledge can be beneficial in establishing a shared professional language and to counter unsubstantiated claims and beliefs about young people's behaviour
- Focus on evidence-based knowledge makes it difficult to handle uncertainty
- Attention to the co-creation of narratives in and of practice foregrounds other forms of knowledge

